



The way how a Religious Correspondencie

*may be procured and maintained amongst the Churches.
For their mutuall safety, and the advancement of the
Gospel at home and abroad.*

IF it be granted, as it is an undeniable truth, that the Godly party of this Nation is more deeply engaged to endeavour a Religious Correspondency with Foreign Protestants then any other people in all the World; then it will follow, that they are bound to lay to heart more then others, the way how this Correspondency may be procured and maintained. Now the way which the Lord hath ordain'd for the building up of the Body of Christ, amongst the Saints; is that only, which in a Gospel work, to advance the Truth, and hold forth the light of life, is to be chosen amongst the Churches; and I suppose, that none can hope for a blessing upon any other way. As for this way, I finde it expressed by the Apostle to be this. That the Saints who depend upon Christ as upon their head, and so make up his Body, should endeavour to edifie themselves in Love, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working thereof in the measure of every part: where two things belonging to the communion of Saints, are implied and presupposed; as also elf-where expressly commanded.

First, that the Saints should not look to their own things alone, but every one to the things of others also.

Phil. 2. 4.

Secondly, that the end for which we should look to the things of others as well as our own, should be to provoke them to love and to good works. And if these duties be not at all minded, upon a true spiritual and Gospel account it is evident, that the main and fundamental rules of Gospel-communion is wholly neglected: therefore such as in the midst of these distracted courses of men in the World; desire to appear Saints: and

Heb. 10. 24.

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The Question.

shine as lights, ought conscionably to lay to heart; what in this present Juncture of time, should be done by us in conformity to this Rule; namely, what the Gospel way and manner of proceeding, should be in our present case, to provoke the Saints at Home and abroad to love and good works.

The Answer.

To answer this Question, without presuming to prescribe any thing to others I shall humbly suggest that which may be without Prejudice taken into consideration by all, and be made use of by those who are in places, as God shall direct their spirits, and give them opportunity.

Let it then be thought upon whether the Leaders of our Publick Affairs, both in spiritual and humane ways, such as offer themselves up unto Christ, should not think it a part of their duty to encourage those, who holding the foundations of Faith and Obedience, make Profession of the Ordinances of Christ; to own one another in that whereunto they have attain'd: and to associate one with another so far as they are come, to walk by the same Rule, for mutual Edification; notwithstanding some differences which may be still found amongst them, in extra fundamental matters, according to the Apostles advice, *Philip. 3. 15, 16.*

And because this Association ought not to be the effect of a Magistratical Power, but should proceed from the Principles of holy communion, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part: that it may be the fruit of a free willing Gospel obedience, by that which every joint supplieth: therefore each party should be intreated by those that have an interest in them (nor should any think it below him, how great soever, to intreat others for Christs sake in Gospel concernments) to declare as from themselves these following matters.

1 What agreement there is between them and other Parties professing the Gospel in this Nation? and how far they think themselves united with them, in matters of Faith, of Worship, and of Discipline?

2 What the Gospel Rules of mutual forbearance are, which they think themselves bound to observe towards others in cases of difference; till God give in further light, that in the mean time, the occasions of strife, of scandals, and of breaches may be avoided.

3 What

3 What their advice is Concerning the way of Reconciling differences, and how they may build up one another in that whereunto they have attained, notwithstanding lesser differences; which overthrow not the foundation.

4 What course they would advise to be taken, to repress the scandalous and disorderly wayes, wherein some set themselves to overthrow all the foundations, both of Church and humane Societies; by taking away the Ordinances of Publick worship, and of all civill subjects from the higher Powers.

If each Party can be induced and obliged to declare their sense freely Concerning these things, their declarations may be taken together, and compared; and that wherein they shall be found all to agree and speak the same thing, may be collected by it self as their mutual Harmonie which the Supream Power should approve and Ratifie; as that which in the Publick way of the profession they will owne and countenance with Authority; it being the Agreement of the Churches and Saints of the Nation.

Whiles this matter is in Agitation another motion may be made, by fit Agents which will be subordinate unto the former; and may by Gods blessing help it forward to be effectual to some good purpose; which is. *That the Chief leading men of the Orthodox Parties should be induced to declare two things.*

1 First, what the Relation is wherein they desire to stand towards forreign Protestant Churches: and how farre they doe owne them as Brethren in Christ?

2 What Concurrence and Correspondency, they are willing to maintain with them for a cōmon Gospel interest, w^{ch} is the Truth of the holy Profession, that it may be with one lip and shoulder, held forth unto the world against the common enemies thereof.

If a Declaration conteining these two things can be obtained, from the leading Ministers of the Churches, as a consequence of the Publick Declarations which the State hath put forth formerly to this effect: then an Agent might be employed towards the Forreign Churches, who should be instructed and enabled to acquaint them with these following matters.

1 What the true state and justice of our Cause and proceeding hath been hitherto, against the Enemies of our Civil and Religious Liberties.

2 What

2 What our desires and inclinations are, to concur with the Godly Parties abroad in the common interest of Religion; and upon what grounds we are now moved to make this motion unto them.

3 What the means are by which our concurrence and correspondency with them may be entertained for the propagating of the Truth and common safety.

And whether our Agreement with the United Provinces take effect or not, I conceive, the End thereof will be of great use: not onely for our own strength, by the help of our spirits at home; but for the gaining of the Prayers and Affections of the Godly Party abroad: and for the vindication of our former Proceedings against the Reproches of malicious Adversaries, which have discredited us abroad; & for the ingratiating of our future undertakings: wherein we may be led forth by the good hand of God, to advance the Kingdome of Jesus Christ amongst the Neighbour Nations. But if no such Endeavours be set afoot; it is very evident to me, that we shall not onely be weakened, and more and more divided at home, but be opposed and lookt upon as Enemies, by all the Professors of the Gospel in Forreign Parts, which I would not feare much; if it should not come upon us by our own default, and through the neglect of a duty which God requires of us and which wee are engaged to performe, both by the Rules of the Gospel, and by our owne solemn Professions; in the face of all the Churches and of the whole world: which to make good according to my ability, and for the discharge of my conscience that I may not be found guilty of neglecting my Vowes, I doe offer in all humilitie these suggestions; and as a Solicitor of Publick Gospel duties towards the Churches, shall Remaine a Servant thereof in Christ.

F I N I S.

